

KEY POINTS CONCERNING GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

BERNARD ERVEN AND CARL ZULAUF

Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics
The Ohio State University
May 8, 1998

Presented at the Spring Quarter 1998 Teachers' Round Table, Ohio State University

FORMING GROUPS

1. Form groups of students by random assignment, thus avoiding the friend-exploiting-friend phenomenon of self-selected groups.
2. Permit students limited veto power in group formation to avoid some meeting conflicts and repetition of bad experiences from previous courses.

DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED FOR GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

3. Help students understand why none of them is allowed to work alone even though he or she does not like group projects.
4. Show great enthusiasm for group work. Work throughout the quarter to develop understanding of the need for and usefulness of group activities.

MANAGING GROUP DYNAMICS

5. Provide some orientation and insights into what makes groups successful.
6. Help reduce free riding by requiring students to evaluate the performance of group members.
7. Require groups to keep a log of all meetings. Require each member to sign the log.
8. Use a minor assignment early in the class to help group members get acquainted with each other.
9. Require groups to sit together in class. If you do this, it helps if most, if not all, seats are full. Students who do not want to associate with their group will use extra space to avoid the group. Thus, a full room acts forces group interaction.
10. Leave resolution of intragroup conflict to the students. [Don't get involved in resolving conflict within groups.]

MANAGING ASSIGNMENTS

11. Give explicit, clear instructions for all assignments.
12. Assure students that completion of the assignment will earn a minimum stated grade.
13. Allow ample time for group assignments to be completed because group work plods along.
14. Provide each student in the group a copy of the graded assignment.

EVALUATING THE EXPERIENCE

15. Use course evaluations to ask students if group assignments should be continued. Also ask for suggestions regarding future group assignments and group dynamics (provided the student wants them continued).